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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Secretary-General says human rights situation in Haiti dramatically improved; MICIVIH can help consolidate institutional reforms and deepen democratic process.

* Secretary-General tells Habitat II Preparatory Committee to be creative, imaginative and practical.

* United Nations will run out of cash by end of 1996, says Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management.

* Committee to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women concludes 1996 session; adopts report containing recommendations on 9 countries.

* New WHO/UNICEF study says maternal mortality figures substantially underestimated.

* WFP needs $155 million for Rwandan and Burundi refugees, returnees and displaced people.

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The Human rights situation in Haiti has improved dramatically, because of institutional reforms, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In a report to the Security Council, dated 25 January, the Secretary-General said the armed forces had been replaced by a civilian police force and a penal administration and the authorities had made efforts, even if timid, to uphold accountability. However, there are still serious weaknesses in old and new institutions which helped protect human rights. Prison conditions had been improved extensively, but were still below acceptable international norms, and the Haitian judiciary needed urgent, large-scale reform. Persistent incidents of summary "justice" was also a concern and underlined the public's continued lack of confidence in public security and the judicial system.

The Secretary-General said the International Civilian Mission in Haiti (MICIVIH), because of its extensive field experience and expertise, could help consolidate key structures charged with respect for human rights and deepen

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the incipient democratic process. He suggested in its next phase, the Mission focus on two areas: First, it could provide technical assistance to government and institutional bodies, including the police, the penal institution, the Ministry of Justice, and the legislature to help consolidate long-term human rights protection. Second, it could develop a programme to promote and protect basic human rights, that would include tolerance and peaceful conflict-resolution, as well as understanding of the role of the citizen, the State and democratic government institutions.

The Secretary-General said he expected the Haitian Government to request MICIVIH's mandate be extended beyond 7 February. Given the 1996-97 programme budget, and the continued cash-flow crisis, the General Assembly would have to appropriate additional funds to cover the cost of MICIVIH for a further mandate period and provide assurances that the funds would be available in the time.

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The Secretary-General told the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) to be creative, imaginative and practical, as it began its final session today. Stressing the importance of concerted action and broad-based planning, he said the Committee's final document should be vital and vibrant and provide realistic and attainable goals to which all nations can subscribe and which all cities can implement. The Committee will prepare a draft statement of principles and a global plan of action for Habitat II, which will be held in Istanbul, Turkey in June.

Coordination and integration were needed to maximize policy coherence and impact, and were a must at a time of mounting resource constraints and the UN's deepening financial crisis, he continued. He noted a ground-breaking rule change, which allowed all relevant partners, especially local authorities, to present their views at the Conference and broaden Member States participation to include representatives from their cities. Local governments, non-governmental and private representatives had shown extraordinary interest in Habitat II.

A computerized Ideas Bank would ensure the Conference would not dwell on problems but produce solutions, he continued. It would be creative, workable and motivate the world to make sustainable human settlements the rule and not the exception in the next century. Many countries were preparing plans of action on urban problems, but few had examined in detail, the needs of their cities and towns. Fewer had the opportunity to devise long-range strategies. Over 150 countries, actively preparing for the Conference, had the foresight and political will to shape a new urban world, he continued. There were also new partners, including local authorities, private companies, non-government

organizations, women's and youth groups, religious bodies, academic institutions and the press.

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By the end of the year the United Nations will have run out of cash, according to current forecasts, the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, Joseph Connor said today. In mid-1996, the regular United Nations budget would reach a negative cash position and then go into a deep decline. He was addressing the High-Level Open-Ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations. Unpaid assessments had continued to rise very steeply and now totalled over $3.3 billion. As of today 26 countries had paid their contributions in full and 16 had made partial payments. "The United Nations chronic illness -- paying out more than it takes in -- has now become acute," he added.

Mr. Connor said that after exhausting the Working Capital Fund and the Special Account, it had been necessary to borrow continually and extensively from peace-keeping operations to fund the regular budget from early August till the end of 1995. By 31 December, the borrowings totalled the unprecedented amount of $176 million. The UN had never before reached year-end without repaying peace-keeping operations. And that borrowing source was diminishing, he stressed. Total peace-keeping assessments were expected to be lower in 1996, which would exacerbate cash flow, with less money to pay old bills and cover regular budget shortfalls. Without any further borrowing for the regular budget, available peace-keeping cash would continue to diminish and by the end of this year would reach a record low of $340 million, barely enough to meet two months requirements.

For years, the UN had been forced by the non-payment of Member States assessments to spend beyond its means in order to fulfill mandates approved by those Members, Mr. Connor continued. The scale must be balanced, and Members must bring their commitments in line with their expectations. The 1996-97 budget already contained a significant commitment to do more with less and provided for all the mandates without an increase in cost. There had been cost reductions of $98 million, including efficiency gains identified by the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget; $104 million more in efficiency gains he was determined to address during the biennium; and an additional $50 million, through arbitrary reductions in General Service staff funding. The result would be $250 million in real savings to produce a zero growth budget and an estimated 10 per cent drop in personnel levels over 1994-95.

Those requirements placed enormous pressure on the Secretary-General to handle a significant down-sizing and further efficiency gains without affecting programme delivery, he said. Significant cash savings by further fine-tuning programmes costs could not be achieved. The United Nations was

facing a financing gap, not a cost reduction gap. "Doing more with less did not mean doing everything with nothing", he added. By the end of June 1996, the combined regular and peace-keeping cash on hand would be $627 million, which would drop to $195 million by September and to minus $80 million on 31 December.

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The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women concluded its fifteenth session on Friday, by adopting its final report which contains recommendations on 9 countries -- Cyprus, Paraguay, Iceland, Ethiopia, Cuba, Belgium, Ukraine, Hungary and Rwanda. The 23-member expert Committee monitors the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The Committee decided to revise its guidelines for reports of States parties on compliance with the Convention. It also decided to draw attention to Habitat II and the discrimination suffered by women in settlements development.

Committee Chairman Ivanka Corti said it had been invited to collaborate with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), on bringing together treaty bodies, to discuss how to monitor implementation of the reproductive and sexual health aspects of the plans of actions from the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women. The Committee stated that two three-week sessions annually were needed to alleviate its heavy workload.

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A major new study indicates that maternal mortality has been substantially underestimated. According to a joint World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) study there are nearly 80,000 more pregnancy-related deaths per year than previously reported. Some 585,000 maternal deaths occur in the world each year, 99 per cent of them in developing countries.

Most maternal deaths -- about 55 per cent -- occur in Asia which accounts for 61 per cent of the world's births. However, Africa, which has 20 per cent of births, accounts for 40 per cent of maternal deaths. By contrast, developed countries, with 11 per cent of all births, have less than 1 per cent of total maternal deaths.

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The World Food Programme (WFP) needs an additional $155 million to continue its relief assistance to some 2.4 million Rwandan and Burundi

refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons. The United States has already pledged 100,000 metric tons of food out of 136,000 tonnes needed for 1996, leaving a shortfall of more than 250,000 tonnes, the agency said.

In its latest appeal for the Great Lakes region of Africa, the WFP has focused on the return and repatriation of refugees, and rehabilitation activities, including repair of economic and environmental damage caused by the refugee crisis. Last year, some 200,000 refugees, including those forcibly expelled by the Zaire, returned to Burundi and Rwanda. The WFP and other agencies are optimistic a significant number will return in 1996.

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